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C O N F I D E N T I A L ALMATY 003604

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/05/2015

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SUBJECT: EUR A/S FRIED, S MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER

TOKAYEV ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2005

Classified By: Ambassador John Ordway, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

**1. (U) Participants:**

U.S.: EUR A/S Fried  
Ambassador Ordway  
SA DAS Gastright  
DASD MacDougall  
NSC Director Merkel  
Astana PO Tracy (notetaker)

Kazakhstan: Foreign Minister Tokayev  
First Deputy Foreign Minister Aliyev  
MFA Chief of Staff Ashkybayev  
MFA Americas Director Asanov

**2. (C) Summary.** A/S Fried and Foreign Minister Tokayev met over lunch on September 30. While the FM saw some prospects for stability in Kyrgyzstan, Tokayev echoed President Nazarbayev's pessimism over the situation in Uzbekistan. Tokayev indicated readiness to expand security cooperation via NATO's Partnership for Peace Program (PfP). The FM assured A/S Fried that Kazakhstan had rejected any anti-American tone for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). DAS Gastright welcomed Kazakhstan's interest in greater engagement in Afghanistan. A/S Fried pressed for strengthening the legitimacy of the elections process as a necessary precursor to Kazakhstan's long-term stability. Tokayev commented on increasing pressure by the Chinese to obtain oil assets and discussions over gas for Georgia. End Summary.

**Regional Stability**  
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**3. (C)** A/S Fried expressed appreciation for President Nazarbayev's commitment to helping Kyrgyzstan get through the winter (A/S Fried's September 30 meeting with Nazarbayev reported septel). President Bakiyev and Prime Minister Kulov, he said, were working to address key issues -- corruption and building up the economy. Fried said he feared, however, that Nazarbayev's pessimism over Uzbekistan's direction was well founded. President Karimov was now accusing the United States of engineering the May violence in Andijon.

**4. (C)** Nazarbayev, Tokayev said, had hoped that Karimov could be persuaded to reverse Uzbekistan's heavy reliance on repression. That prospect, however, seemed increasingly unlikely. The FM also noted Nazarbayev's concern over recent friction between Bakiyev and Kulov. Astana had been relieved to see that the two had managed to avoid a public split. Kulov was a charismatic figure and increasingly popular, but he was wise to avert a break with Bakiyev. Kyrgyzstan, the FM remarked, is "too small for two leaders." A/S Fried agreed that Kulov appeared to be keeping his options open but maintained that Kyrgyzstan would benefit by having more than one personality capable of leading the country.

**Security Cooperation**  
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**6. (C)** A/S Fried emphasized U.S. interest in greater security cooperation between the United States and Kazakhstan and recommended NATO's PfP program as a vehicle for expanded engagement. Kazakhstan's interests and geography, DASD MacDougall commented, provided an unusual opportunity for Astana to play important roles in Euro-Atlantic and Asian security institutions.

**7. (C)** Tokayev expressed satisfaction with Kazakhstan's progress on bolstering its NATO Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). Kazakhstan was also ready to advance cooperation on Caspian security. While Kazakhstan had a strong interest in maintaining the SCO framework as a consulting mechanism, Astana did not see any contradiction in also pursuing a strong partnership with NATO.

**8. (C)** A/S Fried responded that there was no question of choice between NATO and the SCO. The United States recognized Kazakhstan's need for good relations with its neighbors, particularly China and Russia. However, an anti-American SCO would be counter-productive. Tokayev insisted that this would not be the case and that Kazakhstan

was making this point to SCO members.

#### Engagement in Afghanistan

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19. (C) DAS Gastright welcomed Nazarbayev's comments on Kazakhstan's ability to provide Afghanistan with technical and financial support. With Afghanistan's limited local capacity to carry out projects such as road building, the United States was looking for partners and offered to coordinate Kazakhstan's interest in Washington.

110. (C) Afghanistan, the FM responded, remains unstable, and Coalition operations must continue. The FM had provided Foreign Minister Abdullah with a list of possible areas for engagement. Astana wanted to assist Kazakhstani companies to tap into existing credit lines (NFI) to take advantage of commercial opportunities on a larger scale. Kazakhstan had also recently beefed up its profile in Afghanistan by posting an Ambassador in Kabul. Tokayev expressed frustration that Kazakhstan has resources to invest in Afghanistan but that Uzbekistan's draconian border practices impede the development of commercial ties southward.

#### Elections

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111. (C) A/S Fried emphasized the importance of a legitimate process in Kazakhstan's December presidential elections. A winning percentage, whatever its size, backed by free and fair elections provided a mandate that no illegitimately inflated vote count ever could. Media access on an equal basis for all candidates was also critical. A/S Fried welcomed the news that opposition newspapers had reached agreement with a new printer after their contracts with Vremya Print were terminated. Ambassador added that the government's attention to the incident is the type of action that will reinforce the integrity of the elections.

112. (C) Tokayev maintained that the government wishes to avoid incidents that will tarnish the legitimacy of the elections. However, Astana wants to see an OSCE that is neutral in its observations. The minority must be heard, the FM continued, but the minority should not be permitted to impose its view on the majority. NSC Director Merkel responded that while standards are important, perceptions also play a role in assessing elections. The quality of access for local observers therefore will be important.

113. (C) ODIHR understands, A/S Fried pointed out, how to distinguish between serious questions and minor issues in an assessment -- and that is the opinion to which the international community will turn for gauging the elections. Nazarbayev understands, he continued, that Kazakhstan's future depends on more than oil and a strong economy. The long-term goal is a political process that can survive any particular individual. A/S Fried also noted that following the December elections would be the right moment for the United States to begin closing in on the question of Kazakhstan's bid to be OSCE Chairman-in-Office in 2009.

#### Oil and Gas

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114. (C) The FM remarked on the growing aggressiveness of Russian and Chinese oil companies in the Kazakhstani market. China is still pursuing purchase of Petro-Kazakhstan although an Indian company (NFI) has also expressed interest. (Comment: The purchase of PK remains a sensitive issue since it would provide access to refining capacity as well as to crude.) NSC Merkel asked about gas for Georgia. Negotiators, Tokayev responded, were looking at commercially viable options, but Kazakhstan would not supply gas without an expectation of return on the investment.

115. (U) A/S Fried has cleared this message.

116. (U) Dushanbe minimize considered.  
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